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J. TRUMBULL, DEL.

CHAS. METTAIS, FAC-SIM.

ACADEMICAL STUDY.

THE ORIGINAL IN THE POSSESSION OF PROF. R. SILLIMAN, NEW HAVEN.



SKETCH FOR THE DEATH OF MISS MACCREA.

FROM THE ORIGINAL BY JOHN TRUMBULL, IN THE POSSESSION OF PROF. B. SILLIMAN, NEW HAVEN.

JOHN TRUMBULL.

SECOND AND CONCLUDING ARTICLE.

WE have reached the second period of Trumbull's career,—that which is marked by the change of style previously alluded to. The interest we now take in him is of political and social, rather than professional importance. The change of style may be accounted for in two ways,—one by various interruptions to the practice of his profession through political and other pursuits, and the other by a visual defect, which will be mentioned and accounted for farther on. Regarding the former, it is merely necessary to describe his career after finishing the paintings above referred to.

In 1794, Trumbull returned to England in company with Mr. Jay, who was appointed Envoy from the United States to Great Britain, to settle certain difficulties between the two countries, and to whom Trumbull acted as secretary. Before his departure he had been engaged in procuring subscriptions for the engravings he was to publish, then in progress, the *Battle of Bunker Hill*, the *Death of Montgomery*, and the *Sortie from Gibraltar*. Owing, however, to the excitement in the United States caused by the French Revolution, which seems to have divided the country into two parties, absorbing people's minds, and which blasted his hopes, he met with but little success. Meanwhile he painted a few portraits and other subjects. In England, on his services as secretary to Mr. Jay being no longer required, he resorted to commercial speculations, the motives for which, as well as his mental state, are set forth in the following extract from a letter to Mr. Wadsworth, at Hartford:—"I feel at times not a little anxiety on the subject of *picture-making*. I have by no means money enough to live comfortably without business of some sort. I hate your nasty, squabbling politics: they disgust me. I know nothing of farming, little of trade, and I fear that I shall find that my countrymen care very little for the only thing which I pretend to understand. But my doubts will soon be solved by the experiment,

which, if favorable, will make me as happy a fellow as any in America. If otherwise, I must either turn hermit in my native woods, or wander in the wide world."

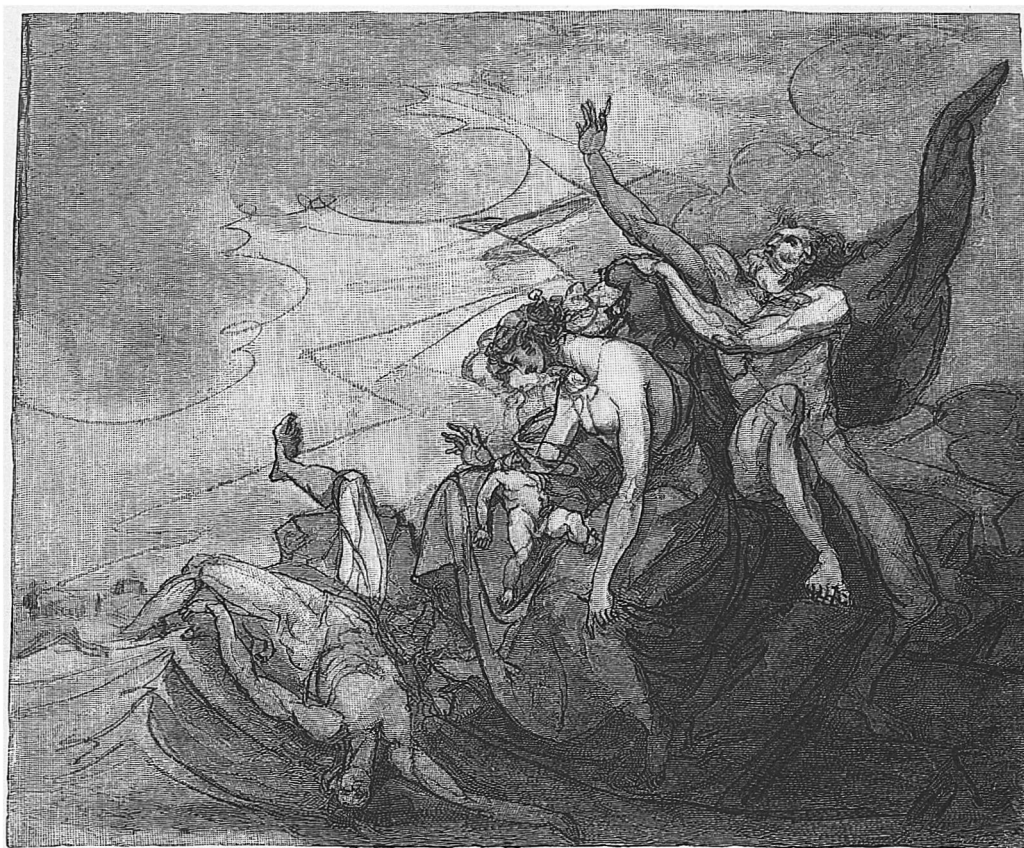
The experiment is the publication of the engravings after his pictures. The commercial speculations consisted of an investment in paintings, jointly with a Hamburg banker, named Le Brun, who furnished most of the capital, and of a similar speculation in brandy. The picture speculation proved unprofitable, owing to the pictures being damaged by water, while on board a lighter at the dock in London. "It was near low water, so the hands on board made the lighter fast with a chain to one of the posts for perfect security, and then went their way for a frolic. In the evening, when the tide came in, the bow of the boat being held down by the chain, she gradually filled, and my cases, being light, floated out. . . . I passed the remainder of the season in repairing, as well as I could, the damage they had sustained." The brandy speculation terminated about in the same fashion, owing to the wreck of the vessel on which a part of the venture was shipped, and to other commercial mishaps. In the mean time he visited Stuttgart, to look after the engraving of the *Battle of Bunker Hill*, then in the hands of Müller, as we see by Goethe's letter, and he passed some time in Paris on diplomatic business. In short, he was fighting the battle of life the best way he could. This brings us to 1796. That year Colonel Trumbull was appointed a United States Commissioner in London, to see to the execution of the treaty effected by Mr. Jay, which duty he performed with marked ability, the commission terminating in 1804. During this period he painted very little. In 1804 he returned home and resumed his brush. He now painted portraits, and again busied himself with obtaining subscriptions for the engravings and in completing the *Declaration of Independence*. In 1808 he returned to England, on account of political asperities which "threatened the entire destruction of commerce and the prosperity of those friends from whom I derived my subsistence." Here he pursued his profession for four years, under adverse circumstances. He executed a few large pictures, "also a number of portraits, for which good prices were paid, but not to an amount sufficient to defray expenses." The war of 1812 then broke out, which put an end to his professional career in England. Being an American, "the only indulgence I was able to obtain was permission to reside at Bath or Cheltenham, in preference to London." The three large pictures now to be seen in the collection at New Haven—*The Woman accused of Adultery*, *The Earl of Angus conferring Knighthood on De Wilton*, and *Our Saviour with Little Children*—were painted at this time. In 1816 he returned to his native land, never again to leave it. His last sojourn in England seems to have resulted in little more than trial, disappointment, and debt. Need one wonder that, with a mind harassed with cares and disturbed by other pursuits, his art underwent a change?

The visual defect which seems to account for the artistic decline so apparent in Trumbull's large works—the discrepancies of merit in these being so marked when compared with his small works—is purely physical. This is due to an accident at ten years of age, which made him almost blind in one eye. "The optic nerve," he says, "must have been severely injured, for although the eye recovered entirely its external appearance, yet vision was so nearly destroyed, that to this day (1835) I have never been able to read a single word with the left eye alone." Age, certainly, did not improve this infirmity. Trumbull by it was reduced to monocular vision, which disqualifies a man for seeing forms and proportions normally. The lack of an eye destroys an accurate perception of relief, preventing one from properly locating points in space; and a person with one eye cannot command as large a surface of canvas as one who has the use of both eyes.

However this may be, the inferiority of Trumbull's works after 1816, on his return home, is unmistakable. To this period belong the four large paintings in the Capitol at Washington by which Colonel Trumbull is generally estimated as an artist. These pictures, the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Surrender of Cornwallis*, the *Surrender of Burgoyne*, and *Washington resigning his Commission*,—the first and last being chosen from among his other national subjects because



significant of moral power, and the other two because the absolute triumph over the country's enemy denotes commanding military power, — are enlarged copies of the small originals at New Haven. No interest attaches to them as works of art. In connection with government patronage of art, however, as signs of the times, they point a moral.



THE DELUGE.

INDIA-INK SKETCH BY JOHN TRUMBULL. — ENGRAVED BY WILLIAM MILLER.

FROM THE ORIGINAL IN THE POSSESSION OF PROF. B. SILLIMAN, NEW HAVEN.

I give a summary of the debate in Congress which took place on the passage of the bill authorizing the commissioning of Colonel Trumbull to paint them.

The opponents of the measure, says the *National Intelligencer* of that day, deemed it questionable how far it was just or proper for the government of the United States to become the patron of the fine arts. It should not go to such expense until all its pecuniary obligations, every debt arising out of the war of the Revolution and of the war of 1812, had been paid. A nation should be just before it is generous. Congress might not like the paintings when they were done. Generally, in countries where painting and statuary in commemoration of liberty and great events had been brought to the highest perfection, this had no perceptible effect in preserving the liberty and independence of those nations, while rights and liberties depended on no such paltry conditions. In reply, it was argued that there was no idea of making the government the patron of the fine arts, otherwise than it already had been by employing artists to rebuild and embellish the Capitol (burnt by the British in the late war). The moral effect of these paintings would be of great value to the present and future generations, independent of their intrinsic worth, serving to recall to the attention of future legislators the events and principles of the Revolution, and to impel them to an imitation of the virtues of the men of those days. Now was the time, never to be found again, when a living artist of great ability, a compatriot of Revolutionary sages and heroes, could transmit accurate likenesses of them to posterity.

This last idea probably had weight. Whether or not sentiment prevailed over utilitarianism, it suffices to state that the measure was carried by a handsome majority. Fortunately for Colonel Trumbull, the leaders of both Houses were in his favor, while influential friends outside

of it, like Jefferson, men of sense and discretion, moving on a higher plane of intelligence, and able to control in those days the less developed understandings of their associates, ably seconded them. Had he been obliged to depend on his artistic deserts, to say nothing of his personal tact and energy, the enterprise would have failed. Thanks to Trumbull, a pioneer in developing government patronage of art in this country, the filling of the remaining panels in the Capitol became possible, twenty years later.

Colonel Trumbull was sorely tried by his country's legislators when endeavoring to procure subscriptions to the engraving of the *Declaration of Independence*. He then lived in New York, while his agent at Washington was a Mr. Dwight. He thus writes to him, under date of February 18th, 1818:—"I have written on the subject of your failure [to procure subscriptions] to Governor Barbour, Mr. King, and Mr. Fromentin, of the Senate, and to General Harrison, Governor Middleton, Mr. Hopkinson, and Mr. Pitkin, of the House of Representatives. . . . Wait on these gentlemen as soon as you receive this, and endeavor to engage their protection. Remember, this is a *logocracy*; you must talk. The Houses are now so numerous, and the tables of the members of both so constantly loaded with petitions, proposals, and applications of all sorts, that whatever is not supported by active and influential friends has no chance of success."

The following day he writes to David Daggett, Esq., Senate of the United States, as well as to each of the parties named in the above letter to Mr. Dwight. To Mr. Daggett he says:—"The utter failure of Mr. Dwight in the Senate . . . is inexplicable, unless it has arisen from my own want of precaution in not having furnished Mr. Dwight at first, soliciting their protection, letters to some gentlemen who, you know, *like to lead*. I did not expect every one to be a subscriber, but did expect some one would have followed the example of four Presidents; for to many of the Western and Southern members the price, or the advance required, can be no object. In truth, the work is offered at a lower price than any other publication in this country. The print will contain forty-seven portraits of our most eminent men, some of them whole-lengths, and will be executed in the finest style by the first engraver of the age,¹ so as to form within the frame an elegant monumental piece of furniture, at the average price of forty-two and a half cents for each head. . . . The heads of our junior naval and military heroes are published at from one to two and a half dollars each; and Binns is getting numerous subscribers for a mere verbal copy of the Declaration, at ten dollars, embellished, as he calls it, with flags, and State coat of arms, and four or five heads like the Christmas specimens of children of a writing school. I confess I do not yet understand my countrymen."

"I am not only mortified, but confounded," he adds in a letter of the same date to Rufus King. "In the year 1790 I pursued the same course here, and, although I was then comparatively unknown and the country relatively poor, I was honored in one day with the names of more than half the Senate, and in another, of more than half of the House of Representatives."

These items show what the artist had to contend with. At a later date a resolution was introduced into the House of Representatives to commission Colonel Trumbull to paint the capture of André, which was tabled.

Colonel Trumbull's artistic career may be considered as closed on the execution of these pictures for the Capitol. The *Battle of Bunker Hill*, the *Battle of Trenton*, the *Battle of Princeton*, and the *Death of Montgomery*, now in the Wadsworth Athenæum, Hartford, on a smaller scale, also copies of the originals at New Haven, commenced in 1832 and finished in that decade, show a still greater decline of his powers. But one head, that of Colonel Clinton in the background of the *Battle of Bunker Hill*, exhibits any sign of his original spirit. These pictures, with occasional portraits painted from time to time, ending with that of *Mrs. Sigourney*, also in this collection, simply display the flickering flame of his genius.

¹ At this time he supposed that the plate, afterwards engraved by Mr. Durand, would be engraved by Heath in England, as he had authorized negotiations to be made with him for that purpose.



The above Head was sketched in 1789, from Sir Thomas Lawrence, with whom I was then intimate; and who did me the Favor to act as Model for my dying Spaniard; in the last picture I have lately been told by Mr. Robert Gilmer, that He had never set for his portrait, except on this occasion to me:—this therefore may be regarded as an unique resemblance of the very eminent and estimable Man.

(These lines are an exact transcript of the remarks, in Col. Trumbull's own handwriting, on the original study in the possession of the Boston Athenaeum. — Drawing by Chas. Mettals.)

Wm. Lusk Quincy
R. R. J.

New York 20th Sept. 1828

Dear Sir

I have the honor to offer to the acceptance
of the Boston Athenaeum, a book containing what ~~the~~^{you}
have been able to collect, of those which were made for the
picture of the Liberator: — together with a few observations
in writing, which I thought might at least gratify the
Curiosity of future Artists — perhaps be useful in enforcing
the necessity of unceasing study and labor, if they
aspire to eminence

I have the honor to be Dear Sir

With high Respect & Esteem

Yours obliged & faithful friend & servant

W. Lusk Quincy

Colonel Trumbull as an artist can be thoroughly appreciated only through his works at New Haven. Fine portraits by him, however, other than those already mentioned, are found in the Wadsworth Athenæum, Hartford (No. 132), and in the Historical Society building in New York. In the latter collection, *Bryan Rossiter*, Sergeant-at-Arms to the Cincinnati Society, painted in 1790, is a fine example of his early work, and *John Pintard*, one of his best friends, painted in 1816-17, is an admirable specimen of his later work. Two excellent portraits, one of his wife and one of *Christopher Gore*, the latter painted in 1804, hang in the New Haven gallery.

Colonel Trumbull painted rapidly, judging by a memorandum, found among his papers, of the portraits executed by him in New York, in 1806. According to this document, he produced twenty-four in five months, averaging five sittings to a head. His prices, which are given in this paper, were \$100 for the head alone, \$150 with the hands, and, in one case, portraits of father, mother, and two children on the same canvas, \$500. In this respect he stood on a par with Stuart. It is worth noting in this connection that Trumbull at first thought of settling in Boston, where he was well received on returning from Europe in 1804, but, finding that Stuart had been invited there from Washington, he came to the conclusion that Boston "did by no means offer an adequate field of success for two rival artists." He accordingly established himself in New York.

What remains to be recorded of Colonel Trumbull is purely biographical. At one time he busied himself with architecture, judging by a large number of architectural designs by him in the possession of Mr. A. J. Davis, New York. One of these is dated as early as 1775. The others appear to have been drawn in England, probably on his second visit. Edmund Burke, in 1784, strongly urged him to devote himself to architecture. "You belong to a young nation," he says to him, "which will soon want public buildings. These must be erected before the decorations of painting and sculpture will be required. . . . Qualify yourself to superintend their erection. Decorate them also, if you will." Trumbull had a hand in the reconstruction of the Capitol at Washington, after its destruction by the British in the war of 1812, as we see by his Memoirs, and also by the above-mentioned collection of architectural drawings, in which some of the plans he drew are preserved. He likewise planned the building for the American Academy of the Fine Arts, New York, which was built by his friend, Dr. Hosack.

In the local history of art, Colonel Trumbull's connection with the American Academy of the Fine Arts, and the part he played in opposing the formation of the National Academy of Design, are of interest. Full particulars of the strife are given in Dunlap's *History of the Arts of Design*, and in the *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*, by T. S. Cummings. Both these writers were his antagonists. Dunlap, in his Life of Trumbull, carries his spite too far. It would pass for malice, were his statements not more amusing than convincing. In trying to convey the idea that Trumbull was ungrateful to his early friend and instructor, West, that he was more English than American at heart, and that in the treatment of his important battle subjects he was only commemorating the triumph of Great Britain, Dunlap overshot the mark. The truth is, that in his connection with the American Academy of the Fine Arts, of which he was one of the organizers and the President, Trumbull was trying to make water run up hill. The difficulty between him and the artists who seceded from that institution was not so much due to him as to a condition of things beyond his control. The plan of the American Academy comprised a permanent, as well as periodical exhibitions, lectures, schools, a library, and other agencies in art education, copied from a foreign model,—that of the not long established Royal Academy in England,—and not adapted to this country, or manageable by directors taken from the non-professional classes. The public of that time cared very little about art, there were few artists, and the judgment of stockholders, whose authority in the institution grew out of the money they paid for their shares, did not fulfil the same ends as the more intelligent patronage of a king and the support of a cultivated aristocracy. Colonel Trumbull was



THE SORTIE FROM GIBRALTAR.

PHOTOTYPIC FAC-SIMILE OF A PRELIMINARY PEN-AND-INK SKETCH BY JOHN TRUMBULL.

THE ORIGINAL IN THE POSSESSION OF THE BOSTON ATHENÆUM.

familiar with the foreign condition of 'things, and the mistake he made was in supposing that a kindred institution could be at once established in an entirely new country. The American Academy of Fine Arts, accordingly, is simply a forerunner of similar attempts that have utterly failed, or proved abortive through a similar misconception of means in relation to ends.

It is much more agreeable to turn to Colonel Trumbull's generous and more judicious encouragement of art in his recognition of the ability of young artists. He saw and purchased one of the first pictures which Cole exhibited in New York, declaring that "this youth has done what all my life I have attempted in vain." The venerable Robert W. Weir informs me that one of his early works, exhibited in the window of Michael Paff, the well-known picture-dealer of that day, was bought by Colonel Trumbull, who at the same time sent for him to make his acquaintance. Another proof of his liberal encouragement of the arts and of young artists is found in the engraving of the *Declaration of Independence*. This work, which involved an outlay of capital and loss of time that would have been serious had the engraving not proved satisfactory, he intrusted to Mr. A. B. Durand, a young man of twenty-six. The only sanction there was for intrusting so large and important a work to him was Colonel Trumbull's perception of his ability. Mr. Durand gratefully attributes his reputation as an engraver to Colonel Trumbull. It does not follow that Colonel Trumbull thought it best for his young friends to pursue art. New York in 1820 had no more become an Athens than Connecticut in 1783,—the days of "Brother Jonathan." Mr. Weir informs me that Colonel Trumbull recommended him to make shoes rather than be a painter, while, according to Mr. Frederic Depeyster, he told Mr. Page, then a lad of marked talent for drawing, to "go and saw wood." His friend and executor, Professor Silliman the elder, says, in the manuscript reminiscences of Colonel Trumbull by his hand: "He did not in general encourage young artists with any flattering hopes of brilliant success. His pictures of the life of an artist were rather deeply shaded, for he thought that the profession of a painter afforded but an uncertain reliance, and that the man of the palette and pencil might languish in comparative poverty, while many a proficient in the mechanic arts might rise to competence, if not to wealth."

This advice and this reflection, due to Colonel Trumbull's experience, were natural enough. He had had a hard time of it. Only his indomitable will secured for him the success he met with. And even this was not all, for he was aided by friends and relatives of wealth and influence. None of his speculations proved profitable. We have seen the result of his commercial undertakings, and the same result attended his artistic enterprises. The engravings he published, to which he devoted so much time, money, and labor, were wholly uncompensating, while his ordinary professional gains were on the whole not equal to his necessities. The \$32,000 he received from the United States government for the paintings in the Capitol at Washington sufficed simply to discharge a long series of obligations. "I had passed," he says, "the term of threescore years and ten. My debts were paid, but I had the world before me to begin anew." In 1832, Colonel Trumbull procured a pension on account of his military services, which, with the annuity from Yale College, secured to him by that institution for the paintings now in New Haven, enabled him to pass the remainder of his life in comfort.

Colonel Trumbull died in New York, November 10th, 1843, aged eighty-seven years and five months. He was buried in New Haven, beneath the gallery which bore his name, erected during his life under his supervision, and in which were deposited and arranged by him the pictures he made over to Yale College in accordance with the conditions of his annuity. At one end of it hung his full-length portrait of Washington; under this hung his own portrait, painted by Waldo and Jewett,—placed there after his death,—with that of his wife, painted by himself; while in the ground, under the floor, reposed their bodies. His directions in relation to his interment were, "Place me at the feet of my great master." When the Yale School of the Fine Arts was erected, the entire collection of paintings, as well as the remains of Colonel Trumbull and his wife, was transferred to that edifice. In the old building the pictures were



J. TRUMBULL, DEL.

'ACADEMICAL STUDY.'

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CHAS. METTAS, FAC-SIM.

advantageously placed, each with ample space around it, and all, if I am not mistaken, on the line. What is now needed is a similar arrangement. The least that could be done in honor of the artist who selected this beautiful town for his final resting-place would be to devote a part of the new building solely to his finished works, his sketches and engravings, with every souvenir of him that would make the collection a yet more perfect representation of the genius of a truly national old master.

There are five portraits of Colonel Trumbull: — one painted by himself in 1833, and engraved for his Memoirs; two by Waldo and Jewett, one in the possession of Professor Silliman, which is here reproduced, and the other in the Yale School of the Fine Arts; a small full-length by Twibill, in the possession of the National Academy of Design, New York; and one by Gilbert Stuart, owned by Mr. William Forbes Morgan, of New York. The portrait now in the Yale School of the Fine Arts was engraved by Mr. A. B. Durand, for the *National Portrait Gallery*, published by James Herring. During the progress of the engraving, Mr. Durand corrected a proof of it from life. A miniature of Colonel Trumbull by Robertson exists somewhere in England. A bust of him by Ball Hughes is in the Yale School at New Haven, and there is a medal of him issued by the American Art Union.

Colonel Trumbull's will, courage, independence, self-reliance, and enterprise are fully apparent in the foregoing details of his career; something more is necessary to complete our idea of him as a man. While Colonel Trumbull was sensitive, proud, of perfect integrity, a man of honor in the highest sense of the term, it must be also admitted that he was of an excitable and even passionate temperament, which often rendered him arbitrary and dictatorial in certain public relations. Never, however, was he uncourteous or unforgiving with anybody. These traits, as well as his urbanity and benevolence, can be demonstrated by many who knew him and still survive. Of superior intelligence, wide experience, noble in aspiration, and conscientious, he would defer only to those whom he knew to surpass him in these qualities. The best idea which can be given of him in social relations is, as usual, that which can be derived from his own language. The following letter shows in a general way the tone of his mind and judgment on important matters. It is written to a nephew concerning a profession.

"HAMMERSMITH, NEAR LONDON, Oct. 20, 1801.

"You ask my advice with regard to the profession you ought to pursue. From your own observations I presume that you have not, as I always had, a very strong predilection for any particular pursuit, and the question, therefore, is to be decided by prudence alone.

"Of the three professions, I think that of a physician least desirable in every respect, and therefore not to be thought of but by those in whose minds nature has impressed a love for it. To a serious mind, which looks to futurity, which considers this life but as a journey, and the good things of the earth but as the accommodations of the inns on the road, the duties of a clergyman must have charms; and, if entered upon with such sentiments, undoubtedly that profession will be found to afford in its humble and tranquil enjoyments more real happiness than the politician can ever find in the tumult of intrigue, or the merchant in the bustle of wealth and business; but it must be entered upon with sentiments of real piety and from considerations of duty, — not with the base view of procuring a livelihood; such as go into the pulpit with such motives only, in my opinion profane the holy place. Unless, therefore, you feel yourself strongly impressed with a persuasion that your duty calls you to this sacred employment, avoid it.

"In our country, and in all societies constituted on similar principles, the law is a sure road to honor and emolument for those who to talents add integrity and industry. The only objection I know to the profession is that it forces the mind upon a continual observation of the vices and follies of human nature. But there are two sides to every question; and the lawyer who studies as much as possible to defend innocence and to detect and punish crimes is certainly a most estimable and important member of society, while he who perverts his talents and his knowledge to the purposes of chicanery and the protection of roguery is most pestilent. If you feel in yourself no aversion to the study of the law, if in your studies you have discovered any talent for public speaking and for composition, I would certainly, of the three learned professions, recommend the law. It is honorable: a virtuous man will render it very useful to society, and to an honest man it may with the purest integrity be rendered lucrative. Such are my sentiments, but judge for yourself, without suffering my opinions to control you. It is

your happiness that is at stake. Keep but one maxim ever in view as invariable, that industry, integrity, and perseverance will always lead to prosperity and happiness.

"When you have made your choice, be so good as to acquaint me, and send me a list of such books as you will most want, that I may have the pleasure of contributing something towards your success.

"With sincere affection, I am, my dear sir, your faithful friend and uncle,

"JNO. TRUMBULL."

Such were the men who laid the foundations of American character. I can only add, in conclusion, that Trumbull the artist is worthy to be named as the peer of his great friends and contemporaries, Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin, and entitled to be associated with them in the minds and memories of his countrymen.

JOHN DURAND.

NOTE. — The statement made at the end of the first article, published in our last number, — viz.: "Another portrait painted about this time, that of Alexander Hamilton, in the possession of Hon. R. C. Winthrop, Boston, from which he reproduced the full-length now in the Chamber of Commerce, New York," — is erroneous. The full-length is the original picture. Trumbull painted at least four more portraits of Hamilton, — that in possession of Mr. Winthrop, a second owned by Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge, Boston, another in the possession of Mrs. Pendleton Hosack, New York, and still another now in the Yale School of the Fine Arts, New Haven.

PRIVATE VIEW

OF THE

SORTIE OF GIBRALTAR.

The Bishop of Chester *party*

*is respectfully invited to a Private View of a Picture,
representing the SORTIE made by the Garrison of Gibraltar,
in November 1781, under the Orders of the late LORD
HEATHFIELD, at No. 31, Argyll-Street.*

Mr. Trumbull
Open every Day between the Hours of One and Five.